General Council shall be taken by a majority of the votes cast, unless otherwise provided in this Agreement or in the relevant Multilateral Trade Agreement (annexed to the WTO Agreement)". This Article also provides for exceptions in some specific circumstances.

Keeping in view the fact that decisions taken by the WTO affect the interests of all its Members, India and other members of the Like Minded Group of countries, that are WTO Members, such as Malaysia, Egypt, Indonesia, Cuba and Uganda, held consultations among themselves and submitted a proposal to the WTO General Council with a view to ensuring transparency, stability and consistency in the procedures adopted at the Ministerial Conferences as well as the preparatory processes thereto. Presently, the Chairman of the General Council is holding informal consultations on this proposal and the proposal submitted by other WTO Members.

Meeting of Trade Ministers of ASEAN and India

2533. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for the first time on 15th September, 2002, Trade Ministers of ASEAN countries and India met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to discuss economic cooperation and to extend the linkages and synergy between India and the ASEAN countries;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the potential of a combined market size of 1.5 billion people of India and ASEAN which is yet to be tapped to optimum is limitless; and

(c) if so, the details of initiative and plan for its development?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) The first ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM)-India Consultations was held on 15th September, 2002 in Brunei Darussalam.

(b) A joint study on AFTA India Linkages for the Enhancement of Trade and Investment undertaken by the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade

and the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research highlighted that ASEAN and India offer a large market with a combined population of 1.485 billion people and therefore, there is a great potential to enhance trade and investment flows between India and ASEAN countries.

(c) At the first AEM-India Consultations, it was agreed that an ASEAN-India Economic Linkages Task Force be established to follow up the recommendations of the joint study on AFTA-India Linkages. The Task Force should submit its recommendations, including a draft framework agreement to enhance the ASEAN-India Trade and Economic Cooperation, to the next AEM-India Consultations in 2003 for further consideration and follow up action.

Misuse of Export Promotion Schemes by companies

2534. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of companies in Delhi who have cheated Government during the last two years by misusing export promotion schemes, such as duty drawback, duty free replenishment certificate scheme and duty exemption pass book scheme;

(b) the total amount involved in these cheating cases;

(c) the number of persons arrested and the number of cases instituted against them and number of convictions in these cases; and

(d) other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) to (d) As per reports received from Central Bureau of Investigation/Directorate of Revenue Intelligence/Customs, 13 Companies in Delhi have allegedly been involved in misuse of Export Promotion Schemes and the investigating Agencies have initiated action against them as per their respective procedures. Since investigations have not yet been finalized, it is not feasible to assess the exact amount involved in these cases.